4. In regard to the veterinary hospital that you want, I am sure the Director of Agriculture will bear that in mind so that you will not have any need to point your finger at him in the next Assembly. As you know, the Chief Engineer has already taken steps to fill up what you call the Slough of Despond and to level down the neighbouring Hill of Difficulty on the Kayankulam—Adur road.

51. Cocoanut palm disease.

MR. P. M. THOMAS (*Member, Municipal Council, Haripad*) said that the Government were not aware to the full extent of the annual destruction of cocoanut palms along the sea-coast and the backwaters in the State caused by various pests. The most virulent of the diseases is the "*Mandapuzhu*". It was first noticed as early as Dewan Mr. Krishnaswami Row's time in the eastern portions of Tiruvalla. Though remedial measures were attempted ever since, the disease had now spread throughout the State. Some time the disease appeared in Kayankulam and began to spread thence. Most of the cocoanut palms in the Kartikapalli taluk were now affected. Dr. Kunjan Pillai was taking steps to combat the pest. Government spent money and got down a European expert for investigation. But none of these served any useful purpose. It was a most distressing sight to see these *kalpakavrikshams* in an advanced stage of the attack. The taluks of Kartikapalli, Karunagapalli and Shertallai were most affected, particularly as the people in those taluks could not cultivate rubber or tea, coffee or pepper. The wholesale destruction of trees impoverished the rich man and made the condition of the poor tenant miserable. If the disease were to spread like this, there would be a progressive decline in the export duties and excise revenue, and the cocoanut palm might become extinct. The entire resources of the Government should be utilised to check the spread of the disease which sapped the life-blood of the tree. The Member said that he had no intention to blame the officers of the Agricultural Department when he said that no good had been done by all their exertions in the matter. The Government need not hesitate to get down an expert from America or Germany. Neither the Kallar scheme nor the Cochin Harbour, the Trivandrum water supply or railway extension or the State-aided bank was more important than the extermination of the cocoanut palm disease. During the session of the Assembly, a conference of the Members coming from the taluks affected and the Director of Agriculture should be held to consider what steps the Government should take in the matter.

DEWAN'S REPLY: Mr. Thomas, there is nothing so sad and so distressing as to travel throughout the length and breadth of Travancore and see the terrible blight upon the cocoanut trees. We all know that the wealth and prosperity of Travancore is largely dependent upon the cocoanut palm which has for so many years given so lavishly of its best to the country. To see this great natural asset wasting away under the blight is a very serious matter. Everyone here present knows that, for several years past, the Agricultural Department has been striving and struggling to eliminate the blight from the country, so far without much success. The department has discovered means by which the blight can be checked, means by which it can be exterminated in particular cases. But the cultivator and the landowner, experience shows, have not responded with that dogged persistence which is necessary to kill such a disease. There are two ways mainly by which the blight can be eradicated. The first is by removing the cause of infection, that is by the complete destruction of the infected palms. The second is the preventive method—that is by stimulating the life-blood of the tree, so that it can resist the inroad of any infecting matter. Just in the same manner as a strong, healthy human being resists all infection and keeps disease away, so too a strong healthy tree could be made to resist infection, that is, the cultivators or the owners must lay themselves out carefully to tend the tree by manuring it and looking after it and making it more healthy and strong. These are the only two ways in which the department can assist you to resist the blight. There are other ways too, more scientific and more costly, in respect of which too the Director of Agriculture is doing his best to teach the people what to do. All we can do is to put forth our best efforts and to hope for the best.

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